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ABSTRACT

This study examines the design and editing procedures of business publications--publications for employees, stockholders, and combinations of these audiences. Following a review of the literature which turned up little information on business publications, it was decided that a mail questionnaire sent to a sample of business publication editors would be the best technique for obtaining information. Seventy-two percent of 439 randomly selected editors returned the questionnaires. The typical business publication today is an 8 1/2 by 11 inch magazine, 4 to 8 pages in length. The body within the typical publication is set in 10-point transitional type with one point of leading. Captions and headings are most frequently set in sans serif type and are 18 to 24 points in size. One-third of the printed matter in the typical publication is art; 80 to 90 percent is photography, and the remainder is predominantly line art. The numerous business publications appear in magazine, newspaper, and newsletter formats. (Additional information on the results of the study is presented in both a narrative and a table format.) (RB)

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DESIGN TRENDS IN EDITORIAL PRESENTATION: A SURVEY OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATORS

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The business publication in America is truly coming of age. Rooted deeply in the history of man's business and communication transactions, the business publication was spurred into being by sociological changes in society which necessitated new modes of communication. As business grew, the personal, one-to-one relationships within a company began to disintegrate. In an attempt to recapture some of the familiarity which was the hallmark of the small business, and to apprise their publics of their value, service and personalities, many companies began to issue informational publications.

Today more than 10,000 business publications are being published. They are of three types: internal, for employees; external, for stockholders, dealers, and community leaders; and combinations, serving both audiences. Their main purposes are employee relations, sales promotion, and public relations.

Despite the size and recent growth of the field, there has been relatively little research on business publications. What studies have been done are concerned with three areas of the publication: editorial content, personnel and staffing structure, and design and editing.

This study attempted to examine this third area -- design and editing -- by defining current design and editing techniques and by spotting design trends in business editing.

A search of the literature produced little information in this area. Most notable were the research studies conducted by IABC entitled "Operation Tapemeasure." These studies examined the position of the publication editor in order to determine his place within the company and a little about his educational background. Tangentially, they also produced some basic data on the technical aspects of the business publication.

George A. Dusenbury, former director of visual presentation for Look, attempted to chronicle publication design trends since the turn of the century in a series of design clinics sponsored by the National Conference of Business Paper Editors in the 1950's.

Some related material was found in Impact, a technical newsletter for editors, and Folio, a magazine for magazine management. These studies frequently used the case study approach to study design.

Based on this lack of information and the continued growth of the business publication, it was determined that there was a vital need for research on design trends.

It was decided that a mail questionnaire sent to a sample of business publication editors would be the best technique for obtaining the information. Therefore, a systematic, random sample of 439 names was drawn from the IABC membership rolls. The sample size was determined statistically to insure that it was representative of the entire population.

Each editor in the sample received a queztionnaire dealing with design of the business publication. Seventy-two per cent of the editors returned the questionnaire. Data from the questionnaire was analyzed using a "packaged" computer program, the "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences," (SPSS).

Two measures of central tendency were used to develop profiles of the typical business publication and the three popular formats -- magazine, newspaper, and newsletter. These were the mean, or average, which was used when interval scale data such as cost or circulation were involved, and the mode, or most frequent response category, which was used for all other data.

Descriptive Analysis -- The Profiles

The typical business publication today is an 8½ by 11 magazine, 4 to 8 pages in length. It is self-covered, printed on 50 to 70 pound white offset paper, and rarely uses colored paper or tint blocks. One color of ink, black, is predominantly used. If a second color is used, red is the most frequent choice.

The body copy within the typical publication is set in ten-point transitional type with one point of leading. It is set justified in three columns, 13 to 14 picas wide for magazines and newsletters, and 17 to 20 picas for newspapers. Captions and headings are most frequently set in sans serif type, and 18 to 24 points in size.

One-third of the printed matter in the typical publication is art, of which 80 to 90 per cent is photography, the remainder predominantly line art. Among the most commonly used art design techniques other than simple illustrations are center spreads of art, art carried across the gutter, photo essays, and bleeds.

Typographically, the typical business publication uses cap/lower case headings, often carried across the gutter, kickers, and subheads.

Boxes and small tint blocks are used in the typical business publication, but the amount of white space is small, approximately 1 to 6.

Of those reported, most were internal publications with a circulation between 1,000 and 9,000 but some were as high as 290,000.

Produced by one full-time person, the magazine generally costs between 10 and 50 cents, and does not accept advertising. It is printed offset and may be either unbound or saddlestitched.

A summary of the characteristics of the typical business publication is contained in Table 1.

TABLE 1 here

Before proceeding to analysis of the various format types, it must be noted that a description of the "typical"

publication is helpful only in getting a general feel for the state of the art in the business publications field. The "typical" publication is like the "average" man; there is no such thing. Much more information can be gained from examining the trends within the various publication formats.

Magazine Format

By comparison, the typical magazine is a lengthier, more costly publication than the typical publication. Also self-covered, the magazine costs approximately 64 cents per copy and is between 18 and 36 pages in length. The paper stock is a heavier, slick finish 60 to 80 pound coated stock. It does use a second color of ink and sometimes a second color of paper stock or full-page tint block.

Typefaces and sizes are the same as the typical publication but the number of columns used varies, usually two or three. Headings are approximately the same.

The typical magazine uses all the design features of the typical publication but adds the use of unusual typefaces and decks or blurbs.

The magazine uses 30 to 50 per cent art in its pages, compared to only 33 per cent in the typical publication. The division of this art between photographs and line art is approximately the same.

In addition to the art design features used by the typical publication, the magazine also uses frames and other special

treatment with pictures to some extent. Boxes and tint blocks frequently are used, and in contrast to the small proportion of white space used in the typical publication, the magazine uses approximately one-third as much white space as printed matter, particularly in the top margin of the page.

In all mechanical aspects such as printing, frequency of publication, and advertising policy, the magazine resembles the typical publication.

TABLE 2 here

Newspaper Format

Of all the formats, the newspaper most closely resembles the typical publication in design characteristics. It is 4 to 8 pages in length, similar to the typical publication. Its page size does vary, however. Although predominantly 8½ by 11, tabloid size (11 by 17) is also popular. The per issue cost of the newspaper is within the range of the typical publication cost (35 cents), and it is, of course, also self-covered. It is printed on the same paper as the typical publication, and uses one color paper and ink.

All typographic characteristics, such as body typeface and size are the same as the typical business

publication. It also uses cap/lower case headlines, subtitles, and in keeping with its news format, jumps.

Roughly one-third to one-half of the printed matter is art, approximately the same percentage as reported for the magazine, with 90 per cent photographs and 10 per cent line art.

Of eleven possible art design techniques, the newspaper most frequently uses only one -- the photo essay -- in contrast to the typical publication's four.

Use of white space is more restricted than in either the typical publication or the magazine format.

All mechanical characteristics such as staff and circulation size are similar to those of both the magazine and typical publication.

TABLE 3 here

Newsletter Format

The newsletter does differ from the other publication formats. It is a less expensive publication, costing approximately 17 cents per issue; and is aimed at a smaller audience of 1000 to 4000 versus the broad range of 1000 to 9000 for the typical publication, and even higher figures for magazines.

Again self-covered, it adopts the typical 8 1/2 by 11 page size. The paper is similar to the typical publication; the newsletter is printed on 70 to 80 pound white offset stock.

Two colors of ink are frequently used by the newsletter, versus one color of ink only for the typical publication and newspaper.

Another area in which the newsletter is unique is typography. Very often the copy for the newsletter is set on a typewriter, but of those reporting traditional typefaces and sizes, they are virtually identical to those of the other formats.

The newsletter also uses justified type and a two-column layout in contrast to the popular three-column layout of other types of publications. Headings and captions are set much the same as the typical publication.

A very small percentage of the printed matter in the newsletter is art (one-fourth), and respondents indicated no variety in art design techniques. White space is also minimal.

The newsletter does use all cap heads in addition to cap/lower case headings. Similar to the typical publication and other formats, the newsletter employs subtitles and boxes.

From the comparison of these profiles, we can see that the magazine is the most versatile publication format. It is a more expensive publication and uses a larger variety of design features than any other type of publication. Use of art and white space are more prevalent in the magazine format.

The newspaper appears to have a stricter news-orientation. It employs standard typographical devices of the newsroom to enhance its message. In design features and overall appearance, the newspaper most closely resembles the typical publication.

The newsletter is a lower-budget, shorter publication aimed at a smaller audience. Use of art and typographic elements is minimal; however, it does use a second color of ink. In contrast to other formats, the newsletter frequently is printed in-house.

Inferential Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed on the production and design variables to see if there was any relationship between them. The production variables tested were: number of pages, format, type of publication, number of production hours per issue, cost per copy, circulation size, staff size, frequency of publication, and advertising policy. Four indices of design were computed based on the number of design techniques used by the publication. These indices are typographic design, art design, technical design, and overall. In addition, five other variables were tested: per cent of total art, line art, photography, white space, and number of inks used.

Results of the analysis showed that design in the business publication is related to four production variables; production time, number of pages, cost per copy, and format.

TABLES 5 and 6 here

However, none of these variables appeared to have a strong or consistent relationship to the design.

Format seemed to be the best predictor of the quality of design in the publication. As was noted in the profiles, the magazine format utilizes more design techniques and features than either the newspaper or the newsletter.

Size of the staff is apparently not related to the design, and cost is only weakly associated with design in a few areas.

Production time was related to design, and although the correlation was not high, it is possible that we should look more carefully at this variable. Although we can measure production time in hours, we cannot measure the imagination or creativity which an editor expends during those hours. It may be those two factors--creativity and imagination--which are indeed the real criteria for predicting quality of the overall publication design.

It is within the mind of the editor that cost trade-offs can be made, that innovative design features are born. It is very possible that the human factor can hurdle many of the obstacles in the path of good design and create an attractive publication.

Suggested Design Techniques

As thorough as this study attempted to be, it was not possible to list all design techniques used by publication editors. The spectrum of techniques and features varies from publication to publication, depending on the individuality and creativity of the editor. Therefore, editors were asked to name any techniques of layout and design which they found to be visually effective.

Very few layout techniques were reported. Grid systems gained a great deal of support, as did use of technical advances in the printing industry such as photo typesetters, which allow for quick page makeup.

Headlines were the most popular typographic target for design variations. Editors suggested the use of vertical headings and flags, specially designed typefaces, and ragged right heads. It was also suggested that captions could be set either to the right or left of the artwork, and that body copy could be sometimes set in larger than usual point type.

Technical design features included varying column widths, using rules between columns and in the margins of the page, and decreasing gutter space in two-page spreads. Most unusual was the suggestion of a totally new format for special issues.

Most of the design techniques suggested by the editors were in the area of art design. Several recommended various screening techniques for halftones and artwork, such as mezzotints and posterization. A two-color look also was suggested through the use of duotones.

Two techniques of silhouetting were suggested. A central figure could either be highlighted through dropping out the background of the picture or through projecting the figure beyond the bounds of the picture frame.

Other suggestions included background screens of artwork for copy displays, reverses, and collage layouts.

The variety of these suggestions reaffirms the creativity of the individual editors. Although many of the suggestions were from magazine editors, newspaper and newsletter editors also replied with ideas for handling their special problems.

It would be interesting to compare the design techniques of the modern business publication with those of earlier publications; however, data from previous empirical research does not deal to any great degree with design. Studies are available from 1952, but most of the data are technical in nature. A few trends, however, can be defined. The most popular publication is, and has been, the monthly magazine. Now overwhelmingly printed offset, in contrast to letterpress production in 1952, the publication is printed on less expensive paper today and fewer inks are used.

The strongest trend seems to be in the area of cost. All factors which affect the overall publication budget--paper, staff size, number of inks, and type of printing--have been altered somewhat in favor of the less expensive option. The publication of the seventies is a less costly publication which attempts to gain eye appeal through use of inexpensive

design techniques. Editors today are also more concerned with readability. The most frequently used type size has increased from 8 to 10 point in the last 11 years.

Beyond these few generalizations, no empirical data are available for further comparison.

The design of business publications today is as varied as the companies which produce them. Certainly editors are attempting to produce publications which are attractive to their readers. Budgets can sometimes limit the degree to which an editor can use some design techniques, however, editors can make up for lack of funds through imagination and creativity.

Directions for Future Research

As work on this study progressed through the various stages of research and analysis, certain areas of possible further research became obvious. Although this study was limited in its scope to only one publication from each company, future studies might examine all the publications from a sample of organizations to determine not only what their primary publication looks like, but to also study the variety within their publications.

It would also be valid to compare the business publication in the United States to those in Europe and other countries where the business publication has become an accepted communications medium. Baker did this to come extent through a design analysis of a few European publications, but a much more extensive study is called for.

Another comparative technique would be to examine the design of the business publication in relation to that of consumer magazines published in the United States today. How are they the same? How do they differ? What techniques used by one type of publication could be effectively used in the other?

Instead of studying the publication or its editor, interesting research could be conducted on the effect of magazine design on the reader. This could be done in several different ways. Experimental research could be conducted in which groups of individuals were shown various design techniques and asked to rate them for readability, comprehension, and overall attractiveness. These ratings could then be compiled and an index of the most effective design techniques produced.

The problems might also be approached by surveying the readers of one company magazine to determine what features they like the most and which ones they do not like. The researcher also could ask the reader to compare his company publication, on a design basis, with any consumer publications which he receives.

Confining the field of research to design in business publications, these appear to be some of the most fertile research areas.

Table 1

Profile of the Typical Business Publication

Format	Magazine
Number of Pages	4 to 8
Frequency of Publication	Monthly
Production Time	40 to 100 hours
Type of Publication	Internal
Circulation	1,000 to 9,000
Advertising Policy	Not accepted
Cost Per Copy	$.10 to $.50
Staff	One full-time person
Cover	Self-cover
Internal Paper	50 to 70 pound white offset, 8½ by 11
Printing	Offset by a contract printer
Binding	Unbound or saddlestitched
Inks	Predominantly black, red for second color
Body Type	Transitional typeface, set 10/12, justified in three columns, 13 to 14 picas wide for magazines, 17 to 20 picas wide for newspapers
Captions	Sans serif typeface, justified
Headings	Sans serif typeface, most frequently 18 to 24 point, largest is 36 to 48 point, smallest is 12 to 14 point
Page Number	Bottom outer corner of page
Proportion of art to copy	1 to 3
Per cent photos	80 to 90 per cent
Per cent line art	10 to 20 per cent
Proportion of white space to printed matter	
Type Design Features	Cap/lower case heads, heads carried across the gutter, decks or blurbs, subtitles or kickers, subheads
Art Design Features	Center spreads of art, art carried across the gutter, photo essays, bleeds
Technical Design Features	Boxes, tint blocks

Table 2

Profile of the Magazine Format

Number of Pages	18 to 36
Frequency of Publication	Monthly
Production Time	175 hours
Type of Publication	Internal
Circulation	13,800
Advertising Policy	Not accepted
Cost Per Copy	$.64
Staff	One full-time person
Cover	Self-cover
Internal Paper	60 to 80 pound white coated, 8½ by 11
Printing	Offset by a contract printer
Binding	Saddlestitched
Inks	First color black, second is red or blue
Body Type	Transitional typeface, set 10/12, justified in either three columns, 13 to 14 picas wide or two columns, 20 picas wide
Captions	Sans serif typeface, justified
Headings	Sans serif typeface, most frequently 24 point, largest is 36 to 48 point, smallest is 12 to 14 point
Page Number	Bottom outer corner of page
Proportion of art to copy	1 to 3
Per cent photos	90 to 100 per cent
Per cent line art	0 to 10 per cent
Proportion of white space to printed matter	1 to 3
Type Design Features	Cap/lower case heads, all cap heads, heads carried across the gutter, unusual typefaces, subtitles or kickers, subheads, decks or blurbs
Art Design Features	Center spreads of art, art carried across the gutter, bleeds, photo essays, frames around pictures
Technical Design Features	Boxes, tint blocks, extensive white space

Table 3

Profile of the Newspaper Format

Number of Pages	4 to 8
Frequency of Publication	Monthly
Production Time	94 hours
Type of Publication	Internal
Circulation	15,000
Advertising Policy	Not accepted
Cost Per Copy	$.35
Staff	One full-time person
Cover	No cover
Internal Paper	60 to 70 pound white offset, 8½ by 11 or 11 by 17
Printing	Offset by a contract printer
Binding	Unbound
Inks	Predominantly black, red for second color
Body Type	Transitional typeface, set 10/12, justified in three columns, 17 to 20 picas wide, or four columns, 13 to 14 picas wide
Captions	Sans serif typeface, justified
Headings	Sans serif typeface, most frequently 24 point, largest is 36 to 48 point, smallest is 14 to 18 point
Page Number	top outer corner of page
Proportion of art to copy	1 to 3
Per cent photos	90 to 100 per cent
Per cent line art	0 to 10 per cent
Proportion of white space to printed matter	1 to 10
Type Design Features	Cap/lower case heads, subtitles or kickers, jumps, subheads
Art Design Features	Photo essays
Technical Design Features	Boxes, tint blocks

Table 4

Profile of the Newsletter Format

Number of pages	Four
Frequency of Publication	Monthly
Production	54 hours
Type of Publication	Internal
Circulation	5,500
Advertising Policy	Not accepted
Cost Per Copy	$.17
Staff	One full-time person
Cover	Self-cover
Internal Paper	70 to 80 pound white offset, 8½ by 11
Printing	Offset by either an in-house or contract printer
Binding	Unbound
Inks	Predominantly black, red for second color
Body Type	Transitional typeface, set 10/12 or 10/11, justified in two columns 13 to 14 picas wide, or three columns, 16 to 20 picas wide
Captions	Sans serif or transitional typeface, justified
Headings	Sans serif typeface, most frequently 24 point, largest is 30 to 36 point, smallest is 12 point
Page Number	Not used
Proportion of art to copy	1 to 4
Per cent photos	90 to 100 per cent
Per cent line art	0 to 5 per cent
Proportion of white space to printed matter	1 to 10
Type Design Features	All cap headings, cap/lower case headings, subtitles or kickers
Art Design Features	None
Technical Design Features	Boxes

Table 5

Measures of Association and Their Significance for Nine Production Variables and Four Design Indices

Production Variable	Typographic Design	Art Design	Technical Design	Overall Design
Type of Publication	V = .084 p = .3788	V = .068 p = .8355	V = .119 p = .0740	V = .061 p = .9029
Format	V = .235 p < .0001	V = .288 p < .0001	V = .210 p < .0001	V = .287 p < .0001
Frequency of Publication	τ = .049 p = .4819	τ = .128 p = .0005	τ = .143 p = .0001	τ = .117 p = .0013
Advertising Policy	τ = -.128 p = .0005	τ = -.012 p = .3788	τ = -.038 p = .1633	τ = -.083 p = .2320
Number of Pages	r = .1672 p = .002	r = .1838 p = .001	r = .1990 p = .001	r = .2299 p = .001
Production Time	r = .2968 p = .001	r = .1992 p = .001	r = .1696 p = .003	r = .2362 p = .001
Circulation	r = .1800 p = .001	r = .0796 p = .094	r = .0993 p = .045	r = .1060 p = .035
Cost Per Copy	r = .0497 p = .214	r = .1842 p = .002	r = .1340 p = .016	r = .1548 p = .007
Staff Size	r = .0231 p = .345	r = .0093 p = .436	r = .1340 p = .283	r = .1548 p = .306

Note: For a measure of association to be valid, its significance level (p) must be .050 or lower.

Table 6

Measures of Association and Their Significance for Nine Production Variables and Five Design Variables

Production Variable	Per cent Photos	Per cent line art	Per cent total art	Per cent white space	Number of inks
Type of Publication	V = .094 p = .5367	V = .116 p = .3689	V = .145 p = .1745	V = .132 p = .3077	V = .171 p = .0076
Format	V = .191 p = .0019	V = .193 p = .0006	V = .227 p = .0003	V = .199 p = .0122	V = .239 p < .0001
Frequency of Publication	τ = -.071 p = .0361	τ = .055 p = .0770	τ = .063 p = .0627	τ = .129 p = .0028	τ = .229 p < .0001
Advertising Policy	τ = .067 p = .0463	τ = -.067 p = .0424	τ = .167 p < .0001	τ = .087 p = .0329	τ = -.087 p = .0130
Number of Pages	r = -.1766 p = .001	r = .1564 p = .004	r = .0036 p = .477	r = .0057 p = .468	r = .2276 p = .001
Production Time	r = -.1348 p = .016	r = .0162 p = .398	r = .1185 p = .036	r = .1292 p = .041	r = .3270 p = .001
Circulation	r = -.0947 p = .056	r = .0490 p = .201	r = -.0532 p = .196	r = .0052 p = .471	r = .1930 p = .001
Cost Per Copy	r = -.0860 p = .088	r = .0853 p = .087	r = .1673 p = .006	r = .2111 p = .002	r = .2299 p = .001
Staff Size	r = -.1093 p = .032	r = .0738 p = .101	r = .0368 p = .276	r = .0736 p = .147	r = .1597 p = .003

Note: For a measure of association to be valid, its significance level (p) must be .050 or lower.

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